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## Desperately Seeking to Change the Subject

Did you hear the one about the burglar who was given 15 minutes to explain his arrest and spent his time telling the judge how to reform the criminal justice system? It seems that the miscreant preferred not to address the question of how he had come into possession of burglary tools and the neighbor's stereo equipment.

Some skeptics have suggested that the Clinton White House's enthusiasm for *new* laws on campaign finance "reform" is motivated by its desperate desire to hide the fact that it has refused to comply with the laws that are *already on the books*. Now, what is it about this White House that would give the skeptics an idea like that?

### Clinton Faces New Campaign Probe

By ROBERTO SORO  
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Clinton is the subject of a new Justice Department probe to determine whether an independent counsel investigation that he campaign spending reelection effort, familiar with the

ate attorney, De- with top Justice yesterday to

#### Reno Orders Preliminary Ickes Probe

By ROBERTO SORO  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Attorney General Janet Reno yesterday took the first step toward seeking an independent counsel to investigate whether Harold Ickes, one of the principal architects of President Clinton's 1996 reelection campaign, lied to the Senate about political favors he performed to solicit support from the Democratic union.

Reno ordered a special panel of federal judges yesterday that she had opened a 90-day preliminary investigation into allegations that Ickes perjured himself, charges lodged by the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee in its final report on campaign finance abuses in the 1996 election.

The White House deputy chief of staff from 1994 to 1997, Ickes served as chief liaison to the Clinton campaign and Democratic National Committee.

Because of his central role in the 1996 fund-raising operation, Justice Department officials said any independent counsel probe that results might broaden into a wider investigation of Democratic campaign practices.

#### Reno Orders 90-Day Investigation of Gore

By ROBERTO SORO  
and MICHAEL GRUNWALD  
Washington Post Staff Writers

Attorney General Janet Reno yesterday ordered a preliminary investigation into whether Vice President Gore lied to Justice Department officials looking into a campaign finance scandal, according to sources familiar with the probe. The inquiry, which could lead to the appointment of an independent counsel, represents a new, potentially more damaging legal problem for Gore that was cleared by an in-

### FEC Audit Led to New Clinton Probe

'96 Campaign Fin-

By ROBERTO SORO  
and R-

fit Illegally From Issue Ad' Spending

auditors, in a preliminary subpoenaed by the timent that started on whether to appoint counsel, con- "issue advertise- the Democratic

million ad campaign in late 1995 and early 1996 and because of that, sources said, the Justice Department's review is proceeding from the idea that Clinton is irrevocably connected to the allegations in the FEC report. The FEC report trig-

### Fund-Raising Memo Leads To New Probe of Gore Role

Aide's Notes Hint at Calls Seeking 'Hard Money'

By MICHAEL GRUNWALD  
Washington Post Staff Writer

A former aide's handwritten notes on a Democratic National Committee memo have raised questions about Vice President Gore's longstanding contention that he did not directly solicit money for President Clinton's 1996 campaign, federal law enforcement sources said yesterday.

The memo has prompted the Justice Department to renew its investigation

"soft money" that would go to the party's general efforts, not "hard money" specifically for the Clinton campaign. The new questions about Gore's role could prove embarrassing to Attorney General Janet Reno, who last December emphatically declared that Gore did not solicit hard money.

Justice Department investigators have focused on a notation David Strauss, then Gore's deputy chief of staff, scribbled on a Nov. 21, 1995, memo from four DNC officials: "85%

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Sources: *The Washington Post*, front page only, for Aug. 21 & 27, Sept. 2, 3, & 4, 1998.